

PARADIPLOMACY OF INDONESIAN SUB-STATE ACTOR: DIGITAL DIPLOMACY OF JAKARTA GOVERNMENT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Luerdi^{1*}

¹Doctoral Student in International Relations, Faculty of Law and International Relations, Graduate School of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia.

Corresponding Author: Luerdi, E-mail: luerdi2202@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The outbreak of COVID-19 has caused challenges to international affairs in term of health, economy, politics and security in addition to the changes of interaction between actors. As one of the regional governments in a unitary state and a capital city of Indonesia, the Jakarta government projected its paradiplomacy in response to the pandemic. Its status as a lower administration under the national government did not prevent it from taking active efforts by exploiting internet and digital technology development. The paper aims to describe the Jakarta government's paradiplomatic practices in responding to the COVID-19. This research applied the qualitative method with a descriptive analysis. In addition, this research employed the concept of paradiplomacy and digital diplomacy. The findings show that the Jakarta government carried out digital diplomacy as the form of its paradiplomacy in a number of activities such as providing reliable information, collaborating with foreign communities, participating in global forum, releasing gubernatorial message, improving data platform capability and initiating an international forum at home. Such internet-supported activities were meant to share experience, collaborate and provide transparency. Paradiplomacy in the form of digital diplomacy activities was mainly conducted to gain trust to the regional government from its international audiences and create an image that Jakarta was a crisis-proof city and the part of global community. The paper argues that sub-national governments' roles in international affairs are becoming important thanks to a new room for diplomacy practices, strengthened by unprecedented global crises.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although foreign policy is mainly the central government's responsibility, Jakarta which is a capital as well as the biggest city in Indonesia strove to project its foreign relations to engage actively following the global pandemic outbreak called Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19). The study belongs to paradiplomacy which suggests that the actors in international relations be no longer only states or central governments, but also sub-state actors such as sub-national governments securing smaller and lower authorities.

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The COVID-19 was officially announced as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020 following its outbreak reported in the city of Wuhan, the People Republic of China in December 2019. As one of the most populous nations, Indonesia was warned to prevent the massive impact on people's health since the beginning. Though the Indonesian government only announced the first COVID-19 confirmed cases in early March 2020, many delivered doubts as the virus spread very quickly beyond borders. After a few months of the virus outbreak, Indonesia had not conducted an adequate number of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests in spite of its huge population.

Since Jakarta is the gateway through which international communities and citizens travel in and out, it could be the first infected and the most suffering region hit by the pandemic. Just like many other governments in the world, physical restrictions during the pandemic led the Jakarta government to take advantage of internet and digital technology development to perform its governance, including building communication and maintaining interactions with international communities both at home and beyond. Realizing the opportunities, digital diplomacy with all possible internet-connected tools was used by the regional government to address the pandemic issue before its international audiences. This paper aims to describe how the Jakarta government as a sub-national government conducted its paradiplomacy in response to the COVID-19.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The studies on paradiplomacy are growing worldwide referring to either western or non-western system. Paradiplomacy in North America has been studied by Martínez (2017). Liu and Song (2020) studied Chinese paradiplomacy as an attempt to give academic contribution in a centralized power perspective. Chen, Junbo and Diyu (2017) argued that Chinese provinces' paradiplomacy coped with its national foreign policy. Such harmonious engagement could enhance the pursuit of both local and national interests. Paradiplomacy between American and Chinese cities was studied by Leffel and Amiri (2018). Paradiplomacy is the arena not only for sub-national governments, but also for non-governmental organizations as studied by Utomo (2019). The study showed that ConIFA was playing its role as a cultural paradiplomacy actor to promote the issues of marginalized people (Utomo, 2019).

The studies on Indonesia's paradiplomacy are quite popular among Indonesian academics. Mukti et al. (2019) studied comparative paradiplomacy management between Aceh, Indonesia and Catalonia, Spain. The paradiplomatic activities were not only conducted by provincial but also city and district governments encouraged by a number of objectives, for instance; to accelerate physical and social infrastructure (Harakan, 2018), attract more tourists (Isnarti, Fadly & Irawan, 2018), pursue the program of environmentally sustainable city (Aisyah, Supli & Tarigan, 2020), pursue ambition to be a smart city (Fathun, 2016), and respond to the refugees issue (Hubert & Dermawan, 2020).

In term of paradiplomacy decision making process, Pratama (2020) analysed the influence of external and internal factors such as individual and bureaucratic rationalities in West Nusa Tenggara government's paradiplomacy. While the then-governor Tuan Guru Bajang emphasized the halal-based paradiplomacy, his successor Governor



Zulkieflimansyah favored education and investment-based paradiplomacy (Pratama, 2020). The central government role in Batam's paradiplomacy under Free Trade Zone (FTZ) was studied by Putri (2019). The study found that there were a number of inconsistencies affecting the FTZ of Batam such as dominant roles of central government and inward-looking policies (Putri, 2019). In a larger context, in addition to central government dominant roles, Surwandono and Maksum (2020) argued that the architecture of Indonesian paradiplomacy regime was still administrative, procedural and technical contributing to the local governments' inability to secure either significant local or national interests within their paradiplomatic activities. However, the practices of frontier paradiplomacy by Riau Island and West Kalimantan were relatively successful to bring investments into the provinces (Maksum & Surwandono, 2018).

The studies on digital diplomacy in term of social media use by great power such as the U.S were conducted by Hallams (2010) and Harris (2013). The studies suggested that digital diplomacy be necessary to enhance the U.S. public diplomacy in addition to the use of hard power (Hallams, 2010; Harris, 2013). Meanwhile, the studies on Indonesian digital diplomacy have been going along with those on paradiplomacy. Such new sort of diplomacy was practiced in order to pursue national interests such as protecting Indonesian citizens abroad (Dharossa & Rezasyah, 2020). The prospects, problems and challenges of Indonesia's digital diplomacy under the President Joko Widodo were assessed by Syaifani and Qubba (2017) and Madu (2018). Despite the increased use of internet, digital diplomacy was mainly played by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in Indonesia's international relations. The MoFA implemented safe travel application as an innovation in digital diplomacy to create interactive relations with other states in addition to disseminating information (Radiananti, 2020). However, Kurniawati, Rachmawati and Dewi (2020) argued that the MoFA's digital diplomacy functioned merely as a disseminating tool instead of the part of national public diplomacy.

The Indonesian sub-national governments also put efforts to take advantages of digital diplomacy as shown by the studies conducted by Adibowo and Putri (2016) and Sudirman, Sarma and Susilawaty (2020). While Adibowo and Putri (2016) found that Bandung government applied e-government to support its paradiplomacy, Sudirman, Sarma and Susilawaty (2020) argued that Wakatobi government's digital diplomacy practice aimed to internationalize its local tourism. Regarding the study on COVID-19, Anshori (2020) suggested that the pandemic be a driving factor in changing the means and tools used by the Indonesian diplomats in the United Nations. Thanks to digital diplomacy, Indonesia's diplomacy preserved in the international organization.

The abovementioned literature confirms that both paradiplomacy and digital diplomacy in Indonesia have quite been familiar. Digital diplomacy has been considered as a necessary tool implemented by sub-national governments. However, most of the Indonesian current paradiplomacy overemphasizes on the sister city/province mode. In addition, the Indonesian digital diplomacy studies still emphasize the roles of central government by mainly the MoFA. The studies by Adibowo and Putri (2016) and Sudirman, Sarma and Susilawaty (2020) slightly relates to this research as they observed the sub-national governments as the actors in digital diplomacy. However, the paper is distinguished in term



of actor and issue. The paper describes the Jakarta government as the actor and the COVID-19 pandemic as the main issue responded by the regional government.

Since the literature on paradiplomacy through digital diplomacy by the Jakarta government is still limited post the COVID-19 outbreak, the study is expected to narrow the gap. This research only investigated the regional government's paradiplomacy in response to the COVID-19 from January 2020 to January 2021. The paper contributes to understanding the sub-national governments' behavior especially those with more sufficient resources and established administration in addressing challenges caused by global crises.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Paradiplomacy

There has not been a consensus about the definition of paradiplomacy even though the study of paradiplomacy is now normal in international relations. Keating (2013:6) argues that it is now "the part of broadening of the universe of international affairs". Consequently, scholars have various foci of research regarding the actors, motives and paradiplomatic activities. Despite plurality in actorness, there is awareness that paradiplomatic activities can be conducted by sub-national governments or non-governmental actors within a sovereign state. However, the study applies paradiplomacy definition developed by Kuznetsov (2015). Kuznetsov (2015:30-31) defines paradiplomacy as:

"A form of political communication for reaching economic, cultural, political, or any other types of benefits, the core of which consists in self-sustained actions of regional governments with foreign governmental and non-governmental actors."

Kuznetsov uses the term of 'region' and 'regional government' in paradiplomacy. Region is defined as "the territorial and administrative unit on the first level of authority after the central government in both federal and unitary state systems" (Kuznetsov, 2015:22). While the latter refers to the sub-national government as the actor in paradiplomatic activity. Thus, paradiplomacy is the external relation of a sub-national government with foreign governmental and non-governmental actors to pursue economic, cultural, political and any other interest. Such activities are independent from its national government thanks to its competence and opportunities given by domestic and international structure. Paradiplomacy includes a number of sub-national government's actions starting from attending ceremonial activities of international events to signing international treaties or struggling for secession.

There are some ways a sub-national government institutionalizes its paradiplomatic activities as the following (Kuznetsov, 2015:111-113):

"Establishment of a special regional department, opening of permanent subnational offices in foreign countries, official visits of regional authorities to foreign countries, participation in various international events organized by foreign actors, establishing and participation in global and transborder multilateral regional networks and working groups on specific problems, and participation of regional authorities in



international events organized by foreign entities within the official delegation of their central government."

Those methods are implemented in order to pursue its goals. A regional government should not necessarily do all of the methods. In particular issues, a few of them are sufficient to project its paradiplomacy. However, paradiplomacy is different from conventional state diplomacy meaning that it is "more functionally specific and targeted, often opportunistic and experimental" (Keating, 2013:11). Furthermore, it is possible that a regional government sets up and chases after its own agenda different from its national government.

Regarding the relation between the regional and national government, there are two perceptions on the regional paradiplomacy; either a challenge or an opportunity for the whole nation (Kuznetsov, 2015:113). Soldatos (cited in Kuznetsov, 2015:114) proposes four patterns of the relations; (1) cooperative-coordinated pattern, assuming the regional involvement in international affairs under a coordination with the national government; (2) cooperative-joint pattern, meaning the inclusion of paradiplomacy within the national foreign policy; (3) parallel-harmony pattern, presuming that despite the regional government's independent actions in accordance with its competency, they are harmonized and do not contradict the national foreign affairs; (4) parallel-disharmony pattern, meaning that the external actions of a regional government oppose the national government policy.

In the case of Jakarta's paradiplomacy as argued by Kuznetsov (2015), it was a political communication form in order to reserve trust to the regional government and create a good image that Jakarta was the part of global community which was proof to crisis caused by the COVID-19. The Jakarta government institutionalized its paradiplomacy through mostly participations in international events and establishment of global networks and working groups of specific problem held virtually during the pandemic such as the Cities Against COVID-19 (CAC) Global Summit and the Jakarta Development and Collaboration Network (JDCN) Forum respectively. Regarding its relation with the national government, the paper argues that its diplomatic activities belong to the parallel-harmony pattern inasmuch as they did not contradict the national government's foreign policy.

3.2. Digital Diplomacy

The study of diplomacy has evolved from time to time and today diplomacy faces the challenge of digitalization in three main areas; "changes in the political, social, and economic environment, the emergence of new policy issues, and the use of digital tools such as social media, online conferencing and big data analysis" (Kurbalija & Höne, 2021:4). The practice of digital diplomacy is encouraged by mainly the massive presence of internet and digital technology development. Digital diplomacy describes "new methods and modes of conducting diplomacy with the help of the internet and ICT and their impact on contemporary diplomatic practices" (DiploFoundation, 2021).

In foreign policy study, digital diplomacy is often associated with the use of digital technology and social media to support state public diplomacy in order to win public opinion among foreign communities both foreign governments and their citizens. Digital diplomacy and internet activities can benefit a state in projecting its foreign policy position before



foreign as well as domestic audiences (Adesina, 2017:11). However, the actors in digital diplomacy are now believed to be various other than solely states played by the MOFA and embassies. International organizations (Bjola & Zaiotti, 2021) or supra-state (Collins & Bekenova, 2019), sub-national governments (Erlandsen, 2018), advocacy groups (Pamment, 2016), and even rebel groups (Bos & Mellisen, 2019) can take their roles in digital diplomacy as well.

In foreign policy study, digital diplomacy by sub-national government should be considered as the extension of state public diplomacy or foreign policy. Meanwhile, in paradiplomacy study, such action can be either to support the state national interest or to pursue its own agenda. Digital diplomacy can be in a wide range of activities from utilizing social media and other digital platforms to addressing cyber issues and digital governance. DiploFoundation (2021), which is a Swiss-Maltese think tank specializing in capacity development in the field of internet and digital policy, records online conferencing as a trend in digital diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Jakarta government carried out diplomacy by taking advantage of social media and other digital tools in response to the COVID-19. With such digital tools, the regional government was able to share experience, facilitate collaboration and provide transparency to its international audiences through a number of actions such as the provision of reliable information, collaboration with foreign communities, participation at global forum, release of gubernatorial message, improvement of data platform capability and initiation of international forum at home, and all of which could be practiced thanks to the presence of internet and digital technology. Digital diplomacy was expected to reserve trust to the regional government as well as creating a good image that the region was ready to be the part of global community.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied the qualitative method with a descriptive analysis. This research only investigated and described one variable in a case study. In the qualitative research, the variable can be a product or the result of research itself (Idrus, 2009:21). This research revealed how the Jakarta's government conducted its digital diplomacy as its paradiplomacy in responding to the COVID-19. It was library research in which the data were collected from various recorded scholarly publications such as journals and books. In addition, this research took advantage of written and spoken statements of Jakarta officials recorded in several internet platforms.

The data was analyzed through the Miles and Hubberman's interactive model consisting of a series of steps; data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing (Idrus, 2009:148). The analysis of interactive model is a process occurring in cycles, regularly repeated and following each other (Idrus, 2009:148). Such method went along with this research as the qualitative research suggests data collection and analysis be employed simultaneously. Only if this research report was complete would all the abovementioned stages stop. The application of interactive model in this research and what was reached at each of steps can be seen as following:



At the stage of data collection, sufficient information was collected to determine the phenomenon which would be investigated. Several phenomena were seen related to Indonesia and its sub-national government's behavior in response to the COVID-19. During data collection, the context of events was included as the researcher acted as a human instrument. At the stage of data reduction, an amount of information was reduced following a certain critical question. The question on the Jakarta government's paradiplomacy and its digital diplomacy activities was eventually determined supported by existing data. Because the data were still limited, data collection continued and so did data reduction.

At the stage of data display, the pieces of information were structured, and it provided a possibility to draw temporary findings and take an action. Data display was so helpful to understand the events in this research that a decision could be made to either continue the analysis or deepen the findings. Consequently, data collection and data reduction still continued. At the stage of conclusion drawing, the temporary findings shifted to a reliable conclusion following strong configuration, meaning, plot, pattern and proposition of information. This research found that the Jakarta government used digital diplomacy as the form of its paradiplomacy in responding to the pandemic. Such digital diplomacy included several activities such as providing reliable information, collaborating with foreign communities, participating in global forum, releasing gubernatorial message, improving data platform capability and initiating an international forum at home.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Overview of COVID-19 Situation in Jakarta and Capitalization into Paradiplomacy
Soon after the official announcement of the first domestic COVID-19 cases was made on 2 March 2020 (Djalante et al. 2020:2), concerns arose among citizens and policy makers in Indonesia. Such situation was aligned with the fact that the pandemic hit over 200 states in different continents by the end of April 2020 (Lebni et al. 2020:1). Jakarta could be the region which attracted national attention due to its status as a capital city with high density of population. However, the study conducted by Darmastuti, Warganegara and Maulida (2020:151) showed that the Jakarta government was the most responsive regional government among its counterparts.

The Jakarta government locally responded to the issue by delivering early awareness to all health offices and units under its administration in January 2020 when the contagious disease was still known as the Wuhan pneumonia (Pemprov DKI, 2020). Many saw Jakarta as a parameter to Indonesia's COVID-19 management image as a whole. The pandemic situation in the region last updated on 10 January 2021 can be seen as following:



Picture 1. COVID-19 Situation in Jakarta per 10 January 2021 (Pemprov DKI, 2020)

The number of total confirmed and active cases in Jakarta reached up to 206,122 and 18,029 respectively per 10 January 2021 (Pemprov DKI, 2020). The figure put the region as one of the regions with the highest number in term of both confirmed and active cases among other counterpart regions in Indonesia. The figure was followed by a high weekly positivity rate of 12.7 percent (Pemprov DKI, 2020). However, its total positivity rate was 9.1 percent meaning that it was still below ten percent categorized 'good' by the WHO. At the press conference on the COVID-19 situation update in Jakarta held on 9 January 2021, Governor Anies Baswedan revealed that there was a trend of positivity rate increase in the city following public holidays since August 2020 and the latest were Christmas and New Year holiday (Baswedan, 2021a).

However, the high number of confirmed and active cases in Jakarta was following the massive PCR test conducted by the Jakarta government (Baswedan, 2021a). Through the test, new cases could be found and those who were tested positive for the COVID-19 would get appropriate treatments. By the end of September 2020, it was reported that 45 percent of COVID-19 patients in the region were indicated asymptomatic, while another 40 and 15 percent were those with moderate and develop severe symptoms respectively (Jakarta Post, 2020). Only with the massive and purposive testing capacity could the testing-tracing-treatment strategy work well in order to expect a measureable pandemic mitigation. In order to support such effort, the regional government recruited 1,500 tracing forces who were responsible to trace those having close contacts with the COVID-19 patients (Baswedan, 2021b).

The WHO required a thousand PCR tests per a million residents a week. In Jakarta, based on the data per 10 January 2021, the people tested with the PCR could reach up to 117,374 surpassing its minimum number of 10,645 a week (Pemprov DKI, 2020). Looking at



the figure, the region was able to meet the tests eleven times as many as required by the WHO. In term of daily testing capacity, the region contributed to 39 percent of tests nationally (Pemprov DKI, 2020). Such testing effort made Jakarta be the most active region conducting the PCR tests in Indonesia. Thanks to such testing capacity followed by tracing, treatment and isolation effort, the fatality rate caused by the disease could be suppressed in the region (Baswedan, 2021a).

Increasing the COVID-19 treatment facilities was conducted in addition to increasing testing capacity. Just within a short time in April 2020, Jakarta transformed its healthcare system which integrated a number of reference hospitals including medical workers and supplies into a single COVID-19 healthcare management in order to anticipate a huge number of infected patients (Baswedan, 2020a). Despite optimism on the new integrated healthcare system networking 101 hospitals across the region, many still worried as the region's bed occupancy was high. On 17 January 2021, it was reported that the bed occupancy with the COVID-19 patients was up to 87 percent and 24 percent of whom were transferred from its neighboring cities (Kompas, 2021).

In order to cut off the virus' swift transmission like other regional governments, the Jakarta government imposed the large-scale social restrictions and required people to stay at home. Consequently, the region had to distribute food packages during the restriction policies. In addition, the regional government designed a collaborative platform called the large-scale social collaboration through which citizens and international communities could participate in creating a resilient community and addressing the impacts caused by the pandemic in various sectors.

The testing capacity, healthcare system transformation, data-based policy making and collaborative platform were capitalized by the Jakarta government into its paradiplomacy. Such achievements were repeatedly sounded in international fora mostly in the form of virtual events. The main purpose of paradiplomacy was to retain trust on the regional government and present a good image of the region to international community both at home and abroad as the part of global community, as Governor Anies Baswedan delivered at the interview by Al Jazeera Media Network:

"We are being consistent in implementing policy, we've been transparent. We're doing everything we can to make sure that Jakarta is a great home for everyone, including the international community. Let's look at where we are – Jakarta is ready to be part of the global community." (Baswedan, 2020b).

Furthermore, Jakarta was the face of Indonesia hosting an exponentially number of businesses. Had the city not been able to handle the COVID-19 and gain international trust, it would have harmed the region's reputation. While the pandemic restricted physical interactions, the Jakarta government utilized digital diplomacy as a form of paradiplomacy in order to channel its works in dealing with challenges and retain its international engagement.

The Jakarta government is used to involving in a number of international networks thanks to institutions offered by its environment as argued by Lecours (2002). Lecours



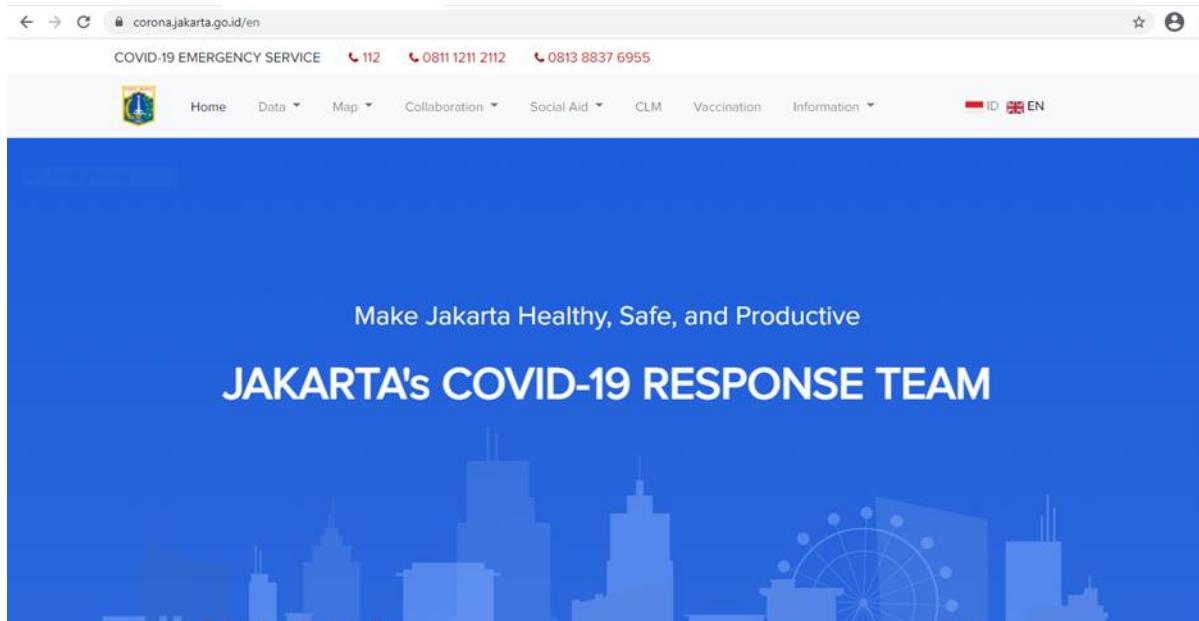
(2002) suggests both domestic and international institutions facilitate a sub-national government's paradiplomacy. However, the momentum created by the COVID-19 and the awareness of digitalization could weighten the regional government's ambition to pursue its goal through digital diplomacy.

5.2. Jakarta Government's Paradiplomacy: Digital Diplomacy in Response to COVID-19

The Jakarta government exerted digital diplomacy into its paradiplomacy in responding to the COVID-19. Despite its various practices, such digital diplomacy activities comprised three main purposes; sharing experience, collaborating and providing transparency and openness to international communities. Such purposes were then interpreted that the regional government was attempting to reserve trust from the audiences on how the administration managed the crisis as the part of global community. Below are digital diplomacy activities by the regional government in response to the pandemic.

5.2.1. Providing Reliable Information in “corona.jakarta.go.id” Platform to International Communities

The Jakarta government founded “corona.jakarta.go.id” which could be the platform providing the most comprehensive and the most detailed regional COVID-19 data such as confirmed cases, active cases, number of tests, policies and other related things complemented by graphs, maps and visualizations. Founded on 6 March 2020, it was a bilingual website that national and international communities could monitor the pandemic situation update in the region.



Picture 2. Home Page of Jakarta's COVID-19 Platform “corona.jakarta.go.id”
(Pemprov DKI, 2020)

Thanks to its massive testing capacity, the new COVID-19 cases could be detected bringing a consequence on the increase of confirmed cases graph in the platform. So did the Jakarta government carry out active tracing for those who showed no symptoms; the biggest share of COVID-19 patients in the region. However, as argued by the regional government it could be an accurate reference for the region to determine more effective policies in order to respond to the actual virus spread. The completeness of data provided by the platform could be used not only by the regional government but also by researchers and other stakeholders. The website had been visited by more than 30 million internet users in December 2020 (Pemprov DKI, 2020).

The information released by the authority is important during difficult time. Moreover, digital revolution has changed people's perception on information in which it should be easily and timely accessed by people. Digital diplomacy in the form of providing information is necessary to support the Jakarta government's effort to respond to the crisis as suggested by Hanson (2012). One of the digital diplomacy goals is responding to disaster so that governments should harness the power of connected technologies (Hanson, 2012:39; Adesina, 2017:3). Further, many countries have been seizing the moments in addition to pursuing their objectives and possibilities for positive outlooks by creating website and operating social media platforms (Adesina, 2017:7). Considering the current trend, hardly do governments miss such chance especially those which secure sufficient resources and face intense domestic pressures. As the capital of the state, Jakarta was expected to provide real information online about the pandemic situation within its administration. In addition, for foreign audiences such provision was a need to know a big picture of the state due to its role as the main entrance.

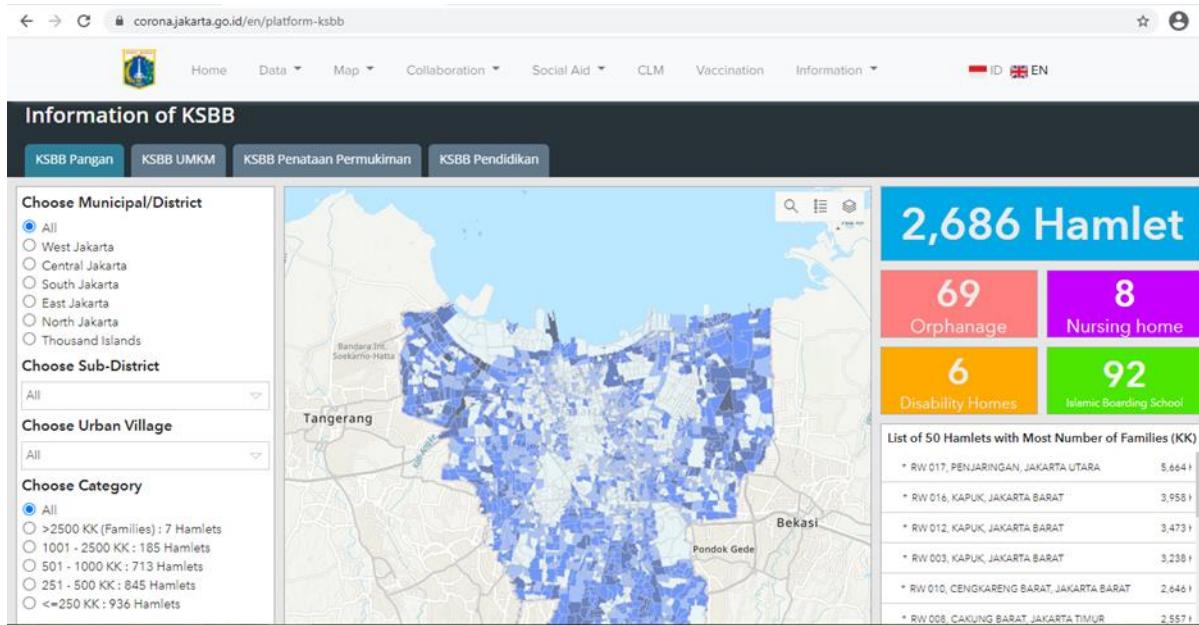
The effort was taken to provide such reliable information on the COVID-19 within which openness and transparency were attached that international communities as well as citizens gain trust on the Jakarta's way in managing the crisis. The capability of providing information would be an information management strategy run by the Jakarta government to meet its belief as the part of global community. This move aligned with the frequently sounded principle of transparency, collaboration and openness which should be guidance for the regional government's policy making particularly in handling the pandemic (Berita Jakarta, 2020a).

5.2.2. Collaborating with Foreign Communities in Response to COVID-19 Impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a number of impacts to the people in Jakarta in term of health, social and economy. On 28 April 2020, the Jakarta government held a virtual meeting with international corporations and business associations to persuade them to contribute to creating a resilient community in the region through a large-scale social collaboration program (Berita Jakarta, 2020b). The foreign communities in the region were expected to take part in handling the social and economic impacts by delivering needs to the local communities. The regional government already made the maps providing information about the vulnerable community groups in "corona.jakarta.go.id" platform so that distribution of needs could be forwarded properly. In addition, the social collaboration program was divided into food, micro-small-medium business, settlement and education (Pemprov DKI, 2020).



Though it was launched virtually, according to the regional government the social collaboration program was getting positive response from international communities in the region. It was the time for the international businesses to pay back after harvesting a lot in Jakarta (Baswedan, 2020c).



Picture 3. Large-Scale Social Collaboration Platform in “corona.jakarta.go.id” (Pemprov DKI, 2020)

The Jakarta government took advantage of digital technology to perform its digital diplomacy calling for collaborative action in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic including its foreign audiences. The action was on a par with the idea that the advance of digital technology should encourage an actor to engage beyond traditional routines. The internet and digital technology provided opportunities to the regional government to engage more easily especially when physical interactions were restricted. Furthermore, collaboration should be facilitated thanks to such development. Hence, digital diplomacy assisted the regional government to both communicate and enhance their collaborative programs as suggested by Hocking and Mellisen (2015). Hocking and Mellisen (2015:26) argues that digital diplomacy is a response to digital technology so that a government is capable of delivering services and encouraging broader participation. In addition, digital technology provides diplomatic tools not only to perform services but also to achieve policy objectives (Hocking & Mellisen, 2015:26). With this program, the regional government was expecting to gain wide participation among communities to respond to the pandemic impacts in the region.

Collaboration during the crisis is highly possible as global environment is now characterized by relationships between states and non-states entities which can produce collaborative complex webs of diplomacy (Hocking & Mellisen, 2015:10). So did the COVID-

19 pandemic give opportunity to the Jakarta government to strengthen ties with international communities through the social collaboration program. The effort to build collaboration through the online conferencing was deemed necessary as one of the principles embraced by the regional government to perform its duty during the crisis. Drawing broader participation against the pandemic in the region could be the effort to show that the region was the part of global community emphasizing collaboration pursued through its paradiplomacy or digital diplomacy.

5.2.3. Participating in Cities Against COVID-19 Global Summit 2020

The CAC Global Summit was hosted by the Seoul Metropolitan government from 1 to 5 June 2020. It was a virtual meeting involving a number of governments, academics, private sectors and others from different states bringing a theme "Cooperation and Solidarity Between Municipal Governments in Response to the COVID-19" (Cities Against COVID-19, 2020). At the mayoral meeting of CAC event involving 42 participating cities, the Jakarta government was acting as one of the presenters along with that of other three big cities like London (UK), Maryland (USA) and Moscow (Russia) (CAC, 2020). At the meeting, Jakarta shared its last six months experience since the pandemic outbreak. As the capital city of the most populous nation in Southeast Asia, Jakarta was attracting attention from its global counterparts. At the beginning, 80 percent of the Indonesian confirmed cases were in the region. Shared by Governor Anies Baswedan, despite its high confirmed cases at the beginning, the region experienced a significant decrease in mid-May 2020 contributed by its testing-tracing-treatment approach (Baswedan, 2020c).

Jakarta also shared its thought that beyond the health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 were opportunities to transform the region as well as leadership. The governor argued that digitalized-oriented development, resilient urban service orientation and micro centric approach could be necessary in the future (Baswedan, 2020c). In addition, the large-scale social distancing measure imposed in the region brought about the large-scale solidarity through the large-scale social collaboration program through which both domestic and foreign businesses could contribute to the regional communities during the pandemic (Baswedan, 2020c). It was such a rising value and practice in facing a difficult situation in the region.

In spite of that the CAC event was conducted in the form of video conferencing, Jakarta's participation provided an opportunity to engage internationally. It is due to the fact that digital diplomacy provides some ease among actors including to facilitate exchanges especially during the crisis. Further, Bjola (2016:2) suggests that digital technology also empower a new layers of actors in a decentralized networks. Therefore, sub-state actors and non-state actors can exploit the opportunities to advance their international roles. To a sub-state actor which is in a relatively democratic state, this new experience can be used to pursue its own goal whether or not it is purposively to support the foreign policy of its national government. Such international participation was used by the Jakarta government to share its experience and expertise in handling the COVID-19.

More international participation in cyber space during the pandemic is the consequence of the emerging digital diplomacy. International participation encouraged by



digital diplomacy is also one of the common paradiplomatic activities by sub-national governments. Considering the concept of paradiplomacy developed by Kuznetsov (2015), Jakarta's participation in international forum like the CAC could be one of the ways the regional government institutionalized its paradiplomacy. The region was willing to show its active efforts in response to the COVID-19 and it was expected to bring about a good image for the region as the part of global community.

5.2.4. Releasing Gubernatorial Message for International Communities in Jakarta

On 17 July 2020, the Jakarta government released a video of gubernatorial message addressed for international communities in the region. The video was uploaded in a number of websites and social media. In the video, Governor Anies Baswedan delivered the development of COVID-19, reiterated the utmost priority on people safety and ensured that every decision made by the regional government was based on accurate data and scientific approach (Baswedan, 2020d).

The governor conveyed that there was an increase of testing capacity in the city whose number was above that of the WHO recommended thanks to collaboration among laboratories. However, the positivity rate of COVID-19 was increasing up to 5 percent in July 2020 and mostly were those without symptoms and with mild symptoms. At the same time there was a decrease on occupancy rate of bed in hospitals and ICU rooms, meaning that the number of patients with severe symptoms was falling (Baswedan, 2020d). Considering the whole update in Jakarta, it was admitted that the situation was neither rising nor falling in July 2020 (Baswedan, 2020d). Due to the fact that the situation still remained the same, the regional government had to take a strict measure by not easing up the ongoing 'transition' large-scale social restriction measure. It meant that strict health protocols among societies and staying-at-home still applied.

The use of internet has been growing fast not only by citizens but also by sub-state actors. The latter utilise internet to forward messages embracing some objectives within their digital diplomacy. Websites and social media are now vital instruments for governments to perform their administration in order to pursue such objectives. Therefore, such media are increasingly considered effective to communicate positive attitudes and programs worldwide (Adesina, 2017:7). In addition, social media holds potential to foster dialogues and encourage more engagement among foreign nationals (Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015).

Realizing that there were significant foreign nationals which were also an important segment of society in the region, the Jakarta government utilized internet including websites and social media to communicate its performance and reveal the real situation during the COVID-19. Through the video message, the government expected to get more attention from its international audiences related to the pandemic update in the region so that they were well-informed. Engaging foreign communities with the localized situation by exploiting the functions of websites and social media could result in proximity with audiences as a benefit of digital diplomacy (Rashica, 2018:80). Such effort was deemed necessary to provide transparency and openness in handling the pandemic which in turn, it was expected to gain trust to the regional government and build its image as a well-prepared region in facing



crisis. Transparency associated with a set of tools that favor good governance in public matter (Sánchez, de la Casa & Rubio, 2017:842) is a consequence of digital diplomacy which the regional government took as the form of its paradiplomacy.

5.2.5 Improving COVID-19 Data Platform Capability

In order to maintain transparency and openness in handling the COVID-19 in Jakarta, the regional government would improve the capabilities of current COVID-19 data platform through a joint project in collaboration with the British Embassy and LaporCOVID-19. The project which was virtually launched on 3 September 2020 would generate and update data on the Pandemic Vulnerability Index (PVI) based on Risk Perception Index (RPI) and social conditions in urban villages and statistical data on the COVID-19 in the region (Berita Jakarta, 2020a).

With the expertises of the British Embassy and LaporCOVID-19, the project was expected to provide more comprehensive and detailed data to the Jakarta government as a basis for policy making related to the COVID-19 control. It was also important to public in addition to policy makers to understand the current development of pandemic in the region until the micro level. Regarding this effort, Governor Anies Baswedan conveyed:

“We in Jakarta hold the principles in navigation. First is transparency and we uphold that principle. We also need collaboration with all parties and the third is the willingness to open our mind to continue learning new things because this is a new type of pandemic and this is the first time we experience it in the history.” (Baswedan, 2020e)

Thanks to advance of digital technology, digital data are becoming more valuable in digital diplomacy (DiploFoundation, 2021). Moreover, material forces and wealth are no longer the most important power in the new era, but data and information (Bjola, Cassidy & Manor, 2019:98). Realizing that people in the region were relatively better educated and digitally literate, the Jakarta government attempted to improve the COVID-19 data so they could be better informed. In addition, digital data are necessity by the people to understand the situation of their environment quickly. Thus, the availability and accessibility of data in virtual space by public was the part of the regional government’s digital diplomacy.

The Jakarta government realized that digital data were important in order to perform its governance and should be integrated in its target performance. The data were not only useful to the regional government in formulating right decisions, but it was also a tool to gain trust, due to transparency and openness, from its audiences as suggested by Bjola, Cassidy and Manor (2019). Bjola, Cassidy and Manor (2019) argues that data have important role in public diplomacy both domestic and international level. In term of paradiplomacy, such effort was made to show to international communities that Jakarta was ready collaborate against the COVID-19 in addition to upholding transparency as the part of global community.

5.2.6. Initiating Jakarta Development Collaboration Network Forum 2020



JDCN is a national and international partnership network initiated by the Jakarta government in order to formulate and create solutions for urban development through sustainable collaboration (Jakarta Development Collaboration Network, 2020). On 17-18 December 2020, the regional government initiated the JDCN forum in order to facilitate collaboration addressing issues in the city, especially the challenges of COVID-19. The event was held virtually and in collaboration with the CNN Indonesia.

At the International Preliminary Discussion session of the virtual event with a theme "Collaboration: Redefining Our Future" involving a number of speakers and experts from cities and institutions across the globe, the Jakarta government shared the approach in facing the new things caused by the COVID-19. Governor Anies Baswedan emphasized the necessity of collaborative approach in tackling the pandemic in the region within which the government acted as a collaborator, while citizens could act as co-creator (Baswedan, 2020f). Since the beginning of pandemic, the regional government was open to inputs coming from scientists and willing to cooperate with other key stakeholders.

Just like at other fora, the Jakarta government reiterated its testing and tracing capacity in order to achieve actual situation of the COVID-19 in the region supported by the collaboration of 76 laboratories syncronizing equipment, standard operating procedure, capacity and human resource (Baswedan, 2020f). The regional government claimed to have conducted a huge number of PCR tests per day consistently exceeding the number required by the WHO. Despite criticism over the hike of cases in the region, the regional government argued the increased number was following the massive PCR tests. The real number shown following the massive test was the basis for decision making to formulate more effective and precise policies in response to the pandemic instead of claiming the falling cases without an adequate number of tests (Baswedan, 2020f). In addition, its health system tranformation contributed to the regional government's confidence in treating the hospitalized COVID-19 patients. As claimed, the intensification of testing-tracing-treatment strategy helped the government to keep the fatality rate low (Baswedan, 2020f).

Hocking and Mellisen (2015:10) argues that networking is the conceptual basis of modern diplomatic practice, including its digital dimension. It means digital diplomacy would facilitate more networking among actors regardless their geographical dimension and sovereignty. Not only does digital diplomacy require low financial cost and boost fast and effective communication but it also strengthens international relations among actors (Rashica, 2018: 80-81). The Jakarta government practiced such diplomacy in order to build networking to engage more people representing different types of sectors as suggested by Hocking and Mellisen (2015). Such effort was taken in order to exchange knowledge and gain more insights on the COVID-19 mitigation. Digital technology enabled the regional government to initiate the event in order to maintain its international involvement. Simultaneously, it was expected that the people outside saw what was progressing during the pandemic in the region.

Digital diplomacy paved path to the Jakarta government to pursue its objective more efficiently. Through the virtual event of JDCN Forum, the regional government was able to share its experience dealing with the COVID-19 internationally. The virtual event was exerted as a tool of digital diplomacy not only for exchanging knowledge and expertise as the



part of global community but also for promoting Jakarta's way in facing the new challenges caused by the pandemic. So was it expected to present a good image to the region as a crisis-proof region thanks to its collaborative platforms supported by transparent data-based policies. Considering paradiplomacy institution as suggested by Kuznetsov (2015), the forum was the channel with which the regional government showed off its performance during the pandemic.

6. CONCLUSION

The status as a sub-national government and the situation of COVID-19 did not prevent Jakarta from projecting its paradiplomacy. Instead, it provided an opportunity to transform its traditional governance to digital-oriented ways, one of which was digital diplomacy. The regional digital diplomacy was purposively conducted to share and exchange experiences, collaborate and cooperate and provide transparency in response to the pandemic which in turn, to reserve trust to the government in handling the crisis and present a positive image to the region as a crisis-proof city as well as the part of global community. Such digital diplomacy included a number of activities such as providing reliable information, collaborating in response to COVID-19 impacts, participating in CAC Global Summit, releasing a gubernatorial message, improving the COVID-19 data platform capability, and initiating the JDCN Forum.

The Sub-national governments' international engagement through paradiplomacy taking advantages of internet and digital technology can be an innovation in international relations. Jakarta's paradiplomacy can be one of the examples describing such phenomenon. Its self-sustain actions were meant to independently pursue its own goal which did not contradict the national foreign policy, strengthened by the momentum of crisis. Utilizing digital diplomacy in order to pursue such goal can be a sort of opportunistic and experimental paradiplomacy. Considering the trend of cyber space as a room for diplomacy practices to more diverse actors, the paper argues sub-national governments' roles are becoming important in international affairs.

Not only perceived as a regional actor with the most responsive policy in the state, the paper reveals that the Jakarta governor was the most dominant actor in the region's paradiplomacy in responding to the COVID-19. However, it is still a puzzle if the Jakarta government's paradiplomacy has really made a positive impact to Indonesia's image as a whole despite being often portrayed as the face of the state for a couple of domestic issues; harmonious policies with national government and underperformance among its counterpart regions due to resource gaps especially in term of testing capacity. Furthermore, the paper doesn't describe the drivers of the regional paradiplomacy. Therefore, those two questions deserve investigating in the future research. The paper can benefit scholars having interest in paradiplomacy of Indonesia's sub-state actors particularly and non-mainstream issue in international relations generally.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author is a doctoral student in International Relations at the Faculty of Law and International Relations, Graduate School of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. He used to be a lecturer at the Department of International Relations, Universitas Abdurrahman Pekanbaru, Indonesia. His research interests include international politics, foreign policy and security, paradiplomacy, and international institutions.

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